

Relative and Kin Connections: Keeping Families Strong

Holding Each Other Through the Hard Times, WA

When our sister became sick, we as a family had to make the decision of who at this time was in the best place to take her kids if we were to lose her. She has a biological daughter, age 11, and two heart children, ages 7 and 8, who she has had since birth. Her heart children were in a guardianship as the Tribe does not relinquish parental rights. On the day of her passing, the Tribe issued an emergency guardianship order and 1 month later we became the legal guardians of her heart children, as well as caring for her biological daughter. The last 3 months have been an incredible adjustment in our lives. We have had great support from the kinship program as we have had to get creative in space as we combined two homes into one. We have combined material items, as well as working on restructuring our routines, how we handle rules and situations, emotions, and all that come as a new family is formed.



We ask ourselves regularly, “Can we really do this? Is this the best for them? Is this the best for our kids?” In the end, this is what we would want our family to do for our kids if roles were reversed. We have our ups and downs, sometimes within just minutes. As a family, we are here to support each other and hold each other up through the hard times. Things will never be the same for any of us, but as the days go on, things will hurt a little less and become a little easier. The opportunity for kinship keeps stability and connections, for our family, it kept the kids in their neighborhood, their school, and around their friends. The children are not entering an unfamiliar environment. We all have the same connections and grieve together. Also, kinship is so much greater than those that live in the walls of our home. The support from surrounding family and older children have been instrumental through this process. Living in a small community, it really does take a village to raise a child.

To learn more about becoming a foster parent or kinship caregiver with the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe visit its [website](#).



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